Import of Rice Bran

2955. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that State like Tamil Nadu are facing shortage of Rice Bran to produce Palm Oil for local consumption and exports;

(b) what steps are being taken for direct import of this items under OGL; and

(c) whether any steps are being taken for importing Rice Bran under zero duty, under OGL to benefit the users of Rice Bran to produce Palm Oil?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Rice Bran raw has been made freely importable with effect from 31.3.99.

(c) There is no proposal, at present for allowing free import of rice bran at zero duty.

Involvement of State Governments to Boost Exports

2956. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Union Government have formulated a scheme to involve the State Governments in its efforts to boost exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) by when the scheme is likely to be finalised;

(d) whether any incentive would be given to the State Governments for this purpose; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) The Centre seeks participation of States in export promotion by provision of adequate and quality infrastructure, input support, relief from imposts, removal of procedural and other constraints etc. States arc also consulted on matters which arc specific to them. In the Exim policy there is a provision to recognise one agency of the State Government as Export House in relaxation of the criterion.

A scheme was launched in 1993-94 under which 19 Export Promotion Industrial Parks (EPIP) have been set up in different States all over the country. A total sum of Rs. 133.26 crores has been released so far for the approved EPIPs.

A Critical Infrastructure Balance scheme is also being implemented by the Ministry of Commerce under which assistance is provided to States and their ageniecs for strengthening the infrastructure and removal of bottlenecks to exports. An amount of Rs. 100.93 Crores has been sanctioned so far under the scheme far a total number of 43 projects/ works.

Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority has opened virtual offices with the assistance of State Government departments/agencies, in Kerala, Punjab, Orissa, Tripura, Manipur and Jammu & Kashmir to facilitate dissemination of information regarding its schemes and projects. A flower auction centre is proposed to be set up at Bangalore with the assistance of designated agency of the Government of Kerala.

Free Trade Zones

2957. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up free trade zones in the country?

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (c) A proposal to convert the existing seven Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in the country into Free Trade Zones is under consideration. Details in this regard are being worked out.

Production of Tea

2958. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total production of tea during the last two years, State-wise and year wise vis-a-vis actual consumption;

(b) whether Government arc aware that the on going dry spell may hit Assam tea as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 22nd March, 1999;

(c) if so, what remedial measures Government have taken in this regard;

(d) whether tea is imported;, and

(c) if so, the details of tea imported during last one year and the country from where tea was imported?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) the State-wise production of tea during the last two years are as under:—

(Quantity in M.Kgs)

State	Production 1997	1998
Assam	425.43	462.78
West Bengal	169.95	195.71
Tamil Nadu	130.59	125.09
Kerala	69.64	70.62
Karnataka	5.41	5.67
Others	9.59	10.54
ALL INDIA	810.61	870.41

State-wise Consumption figures arc not maintained. The Consumption of tea in the country during 1997 & 1998 is estimated at 633 Mn. Kgs & 645 Mn. Kgs respectively.

(b) and (c) The tea gardens in Assam experienced an unprecedented long dry spell during the first three months of 1999. While this has not effected the crop production in Assam during January and February 99, the production for March has reportedly been adversely affected. The Board has sent an advisory Circular to all the Tea Producer Associations highlighting the measures to be taken by them for minimising the impact of drought. The Producer Associations have been requested to bring this to the notice of all the member gardens.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. An estimated 7 Mn. Kgs of tea was imported during 97-98 from countries like Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Bangladesh, Nepal etc.

Export of Tea

2959. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the countires to which tea is being exported at present;

(b) the total amount worth tea exported to these countries during the last three years;

(c) the export order received from various countries for 1999-2000;

(d) whether the recent dry spell in Assam and other tea producing States will have any adverse effect on the production and export of tea; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government to deal with the situation?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Indian tea is exported to more than 80 countries of the world. Major importers of India tea are Russia and CIS countires, U.K., Germany, Poland, U.A.E., Iran, Arab Republic of Egypt, Japan, Saudi Arabia etc.